

Richard: So, everything else about my lifestyle was really bad. I started, you know, drug dealing at 13 years old.

UHC: That was when you lived in New York?

Richard: I was in Jersey. I let, you know, I made...you know, my real mother, she died when I was born. Then I was placed in foster homes. At the foster home, I was adopted by a lady, a black family, you know, then moved into Jersey, city of Camden. Then at 13, I had my first daughter. After that, went into drug dealing, gangs, killed somebody at early age, went to prison, a juvenile prison, you know. After that, as I grew up, I went to state prison, got out, got back in, got out, you know, quit money, quit that, you know. Then went to be homeless. You know, I had to...went to Salvation Army up on Rutherford Road. You know, there was too much drama there because I have kids by the aunt's mother, my wife's mother, my wife's aunt, I mean. I mean, who am I talking about? I mean, my wife's sister worked at Salvation Army on Rutherford Road, so me and her never got along because she don't like skin color, just the color of money. Then came down here, got into, you know Jesse Jackson? Got moved in there by her family. Got into, well, mostly my type of drugs was crack cocaine. You know, didn't want to pay the bills. Got into the rescue mission. Got thrown out of the rescue mission. My church member, you know, and the staff over there at mental health, had to get me back in there. Stayed in there for a couple more years until Reedy Place was finally built. So, I got moved in. Been here since...was it October 18th of last year. I've been here a year. Have my visits with my daughters. I got two little girls. Six and three. You know, I don't have custody of them because I was, you know, I had a very bad, you know, drug addiction, alcohol addiction. You know, I'm not afraid, and I'm not shy, you know. You know, I'm not ashamed. You know, I had to, you know, show myself to...I had to pull myself through. You know my talking's bad because I had teeth pulled out. I had all my teeth pulled. You know, when you do crack cocaine or any type of drug will rotten out your teeth, but I had to get them pulled out. You know, my lifestyle, you know, never went back to school upstate. You know, I went to probably fifth grade. Didn't care about nothing. I didn't care about life. I got to, just like I said, when I came down here, moved into Jesse Jackson. My pastor, I met him in Jesse Jackson. You know, he'll tell you this day, every drug I could get, you know, crack cocaine, my arms were probably...[??????] You know, [???] You know, he tried to preach to me. You know, I didn't care. I didn't care about life. You now, I didn't care about salvation. I didn't care about God. All I cared about drugs and the devil. I worshipped the devil. Until one day I turned the table, you know, I had, I got an implant in my chest for epilepsy. You know, one day just, it hit me. I said that I can't, you know, I can't deal with it no more. I said I had to turn, you know, turn my life around. Then I did. You know, you stayed at rescue mission for a couple years, then you know, my wife was giving me problems, and her family was giving me problems with visitation of my daughters. You know, I was clean. I been clean now about, going on six years, off drugs. And eleven years this January will be eleven years alcohol.

UHC: Wow. Congratulations.

Richard: Thanks. I'm proud of myself, too, because, like, young ladies, every grocery store you go to, what do you see? What do you see? Besides groceries. What do you see?

UHC: Alcohol.

Richard: That's right. That's the worst. The most killer on the, you know, streets is alcohol. Every corner, there's a liquor store, right?

UHC: Yeah.

Richard: Gas station, liquor store. You know...

UHC: You can get it anywhere.

Richard: Oh yeah. Anywhere, it don't matter. Bi-lo's. You can go...you can go any...they sell it on Sunday's. You know, that's, you know, Satan, you know, worst, you know, that's the worst like I said. Alcohol's the worst. Addiction. Drugs. You know, what else? I was getting into messing around with different girls. You know. I couldn't do it. My wife tried to, you ever heard of tricks? They call it...it's basically prostitution, you know. I had, you know, I get SSI for disability, you know, give my wife...my wife brought [????], she's like, oh, here you go. You know, do this, do this. I can't do that. I ain't trying to catch no disease. You don't know what this girl might...how many, you know, sugar daddies she might have had. You know, so I never did it. You know, I was scared, you know. You know, life is too short. You know what I mean? Life's too sweet. You know? I'm not trying to die and turn 40 on the first of October, you know. I didn't think I was going to live this long because I been shot once, you know. Upstate I been shot, and I thought I was going to die. You know, I got shot in my leg. But at a young age - I think I was about two years old - the mother and dad adopted me, abused me physically and mentally. I was hung out a window, two stories, two stories, by my seat. See that mark right there? I been stabbed by them. I got, see right here?

UHC: By your foster mom?

Richard: Her boyfriend, Mike. [???] See the marks there?

UHC: Yeah.

Richard: I was burnt with cigarettes. I was cut right there, right there. I was stabbed. And another one there. You know, there ain't a day, day, morning, noon, and night, that I don't think about that physical abuse, neglect, not by my mother because I seen what he did to her. You know, I wanted to go up there, you know, you know, this year for the holidays.

UHC: Back up to New Jersey?

Richard: My mother just passed away about a couple of months back, about three months ago from lung cancer. She was great.

UHC: And this is the...?

Richard: Adopted one that, yes. You know, I thought it over and over and over. And I said like this to myself. I was like, I wanted to go up there and find him. You know what I wanted to do to him? Get rid of him. You know, I wanted to kill him. And I told...so, you know, a staff worker up there at mental health. I'm not ashamed, you know, I'm not ashamed. I [??] it. I told her I wanted to go up there, and I'm going to kill him. She's like, "Richard, why you want to go up there and kill him?" For what he put me through. Through my life. What he did to me. Did to my mother. But it ain't worth it. You know, and I feel it. I feel the, how can I put it? The pain and suffering that he put me through, that's partly why I did the drugs. I stayed in Spartanburg County. You ever heard of Camp Croft apartments? It's up...you know where the courthouse is at? It was on the news before about the buses and all. They were talking...I lived out there. I didn't do drugs. I didn't do alcohol. You know, when we got down here to Greenville, her, my wife's sister knew this guy that moved in over there in, you know, Jesse Jackson. That's when it all...that's when it started. I lost a lot of weight. My illness dropped. I was having my convulsions. I didn't care about nothing. You know, like I said, I was ready to die. You know? You know, when I see...seen a different way, you know...you know life will go on. Like I said, my life wasn't peaches and cream, you know. You know, my life was like growing up as a kid, too, you know, at 13 before I killed that boy, you know, what's the name of that show...t.v. show? With J.J. and all?

UHC: J.J.?

Richard: It's a black t.v. show.

UHC: The Wire?

Richard: No, no, no. I've forgotten. Well, my life was like that. We lived in the projects, you know. It was like that. I had anything I had to do it I had to do. You know, at...at, you know, 13 years old, ten dollars was a lot of money. Ten dollars ain't a lot of money to y'all, young ladies, right?

UHC: I think it is.

Richard: That's not a lot of money. Ten dollars goes like that. With, you know, gas prices, but you know, I was out there, you know, doing my thing. You know, make that money. Then finally, like I said, another...another...another gangster came up on turf, played around with a gun. It went off and got him right in the temple of his head. Then another gang member came looking for us and shot and got me in the knee. So, now, ever...I got everlasting life. I've been saved now about six years. I go to church down in Nickeltown. You probably heard of that. You know, I've been there for a while. You know, I tried, you know, tried to help people in ways in here that's not saved, you know, but they don't want it. They don't want life, but they still go out there and do the thing with...we got a couple...we got one girl with problems still does her prostitution and crack cocaine, you know, and not, you know, like I say, you can't judge another person by their cover. It says in the Bible. I don't know. Y'all go to church, right?

UHC: Uh-hmm.

Richard: Y'all sure?

UHC: Yeah.

Richard: Well, you know, it says in the Bible about judging, right? The only one who can judge is God. You know, so God got me this far, and he's going to continue to make me grow. And I'm growing to this day. Like I said, I've been here a year, and I'm going to be here for as long as it takes, you know. Because my physical health, you know, I, you know, I'm going to grow. Is there anything else y'all would like to know? Any questions? It don't matter. Y'all can ask me questions. I'm not ashamed to tell.

UHC: How did you wind up from New Jersey down here?

Richard: Oh well...oh, okay.

UHC: And how old were you when you wound up down here?

Richard: I'm 40...I was about 35. What happened was, my wife now, we weren't married. We were just dating. She was pregnant with our first daughter. Her family lived in Greenville. Her sister and her mom, you know. So she called me in Jersey from Greenville, and she's like, "Well, why don't you come up to Greenville because my mom and my sister want to meet you?" I said, "Okay, I can do that." I said I'm going to buy, you know, what do they call that? Greyhound bus ticket. I said, "Okay, I can do that. So, as soon as I got to the bus terminal down here, her mom picked me up. We get to talking. I had a whole lot of money. They put something in a drink. I don't know what it was. A pill or something because it put me to sleep. I woke up, my money's gone. I had about \$1800 in cash, and I was like, "Where's my money? Where's my money?" I said, "I want my money or y'all's going...both of y'all's going to die." I had a handgun on me too. I said, "Both of y'all's going to die if you won't give me my money, so don't play." It was dirty money. I said don't play around my money because I was going to go back to Jersey anyway. I was just coming up, you know. Then ever since then, I mean, I hate Greenville. I hate it. If I could go back, but I can't go back, you know. Y'all ask more questions. I like the questions because it makes me stronger.

UHC: How, so when you were 13 you got into...you started getting into all of your problems? Where were you living then? Were you still living with the mom that adopted you?

Richard: Yes. She knew that I was into the drugs, dealing, and gangs, you know. We had...I guess, you know, she had to work, too. You know, she was working at a...how can I put it? I guess, what was that? A...it was like a...I think, not a car wash, but a laundrymat or some...and she'll come in late at night, you know. You know, \$30 ain't a lot of money to her. Back then that's a lot of money. So I was out there selling, and she's like...she always said like this, "I don't want you to do that. I don't want my only son to get killed." Because I got other sisters that was adopted, you know. And you know, I said, "Okay, I ain't going to do it." You know, after she'd go to work, I'd creep out of the house, right back to the street. You know, then that night she heard that I got shot, you

know, somebody went to her and told her, "Your son been shot." Have you heard? No, no, no. Get to the hospital, right to the hospital, Cooper's Hospital. Because I...I was, you know, they had to get a bullet, get lodged out of my knee. I still feel the pain at times, you know. You can hear the crunch. It's painful, but you know, when she's like it again, "I don't want you out there. Something I want...because something bad is really going to happen to you." Okay. Then you know, I was still 13. That's when I shot the boy in the temple. It went off. I didn't know it was going to go off. I didn't mean it, and I have nightmares about it. It's a scary situation. It really is. I have nightmares about it. I think about it. I talk about it. A lot of times I don't talk about it. I keep it in, you know. What are you supposed to do? Somebody going to smoke you. They're going to kill you too, if you don't...you got to protect yourself. You know, but I got a phone call one day a couple [??] back, you know...you know [??], and they...and I get, you know, from my sister, they're like, "Your momma died." I was like, what? Momma died. I wanted to run into my apartment. I stayed in my apartment for the whole week. You know what they call that?

UHC: Depression?

Richard: There's more than that. Depressed. Upsetment. There's a lot...there's a lot that you can put on the table, but she did a lot for me. And I didn't even get a chance to go up and view the body.

UHC: When was the last time you'd seen her?

Richard: About five years. I told her I was coming back because, you know, we weren't married then. You know, I was just dating this girl. You know, my momma's like this, "Well, Michelle, you take care of my son." And she's like this, "Richard, you take care of Michelle." Because she was pregnant with our first daughter. I got...I got other kids, yeah from a previous...I got a son and two other daughters upstate.

UHC: Do you ever have any contact with them?

Richard: Oh yeah, I talk...my son won't talk to me. He's a drug dealer. He took the place of his daddy, and I tell him all the time, you know, "You got two thing you going to end up being in prison or being six foot in the ground." Oh, money, money, money. Money ain't all about it. You're going to end up getting killed. Go back to school, don't be a fool, you know. I mean, it's too...life's too short. Look on the news and see what happens every day when a human being's getting killed and shot. Y'all watch the news?

UHC: No. Sometimes.

Richard: You should watch it all the time.

UHC: I should.

Richard: Well, I know sometimes it might depress ya'll out too, right? Next question? It don't matter. I'm not ashamed of questions. They ask us questions over there at the center.

UHC: So where...when...so you lived in New Jersey from the time you were 13 to 35?

Richard: Uh-hmm.

UHC: Like, did you like with your mom there?

Richard: Yeah.

UHC: Or did you have your own place?

Richard: No. I couldn't have my own place at 13.

UHC: Well, yeah.

Richard: I lived with Momma until about 35. No, I left there before 35 because I'm 40.

UHC: Spartanburg?

Richard: No, I lived in Jersey. I stayed with my mom for a long time. I was 13. I went to jail. Got out of jail. Still stayed with Mom. What did I do? At 21, I did...I had my own place, then stayed in Spartanburg for a few years. Then about 5 years before now, I was 35 and stayed at Jesse Jackson. I will never go back to Jersey again. That was total, total misery. It's like...it's like Halloween.

UHC: Really?

Richard: You wouldn't want to go back there, would you? You wouldn't want to go live in the city of Camden?

UHC: No, I wouldn't want to live in Camden.

Richard: Or Philadelphia.

UHC: Or, no, I wouldn't want to live in any city. I live about ten miles from Trenton.

Richard: I know where that's at.

UHC: That's as close as I want to be.

Richard: I got a sister that lives in Delaware.

UHC: Oh, really?

Richard: Because we used to have gang fights a lot with Philadelphia. North Philly to come over, you know where the bridge is at, right? To come over to our city, you know, we fight with them. And I ain't talking about with hands. I'm talking about with guns.

UHC: What gang were in?

Richard: Huh? Eight ball. And they had 32nd Street, North Camden, right...it's right over by...what do they call that? Woodrow Wilson High School. You got Camden High.

UHC: Okay, I'm kind of familiar with it.

Richard: They got, you know, they always played turkey ball, football, and all. It's not a good...it's not a good area to be around either. The police are afraid to even come out at times.

UHC: I've heard that.

Richard: Yeah, and plus, you know, Halloween's coming out, and they be snatching bags from kids. And they'll even snatch, you know, they'll snatch a purse like that. I'm serious. A drug addict, very addictive person, now, when I was very addictive to drugs, I probably would have snatched y'all's purse. I'm serious. That's how crack cocaine or any drug will get you, you know. It don't really matter. I never snatched a purse, but I'm just saying, you know, it's just a front, you know. Just to show that's what goes on with drugs, you know. You know, frustration, when you didn't have nothing back then, you had to do what you had to do, you know. My, like I said, my life wasn't peaches and cream, you know. It was hard on my life. But I...if I could, like they...like we learned today, if we could turn the clock back, I wish I could. You know, not to drug deal and the gang, you know, and shot that boy. Because it could have been me. I mean, I see it...I seen a friend of mine get killed, a good friend. He was in the gang. He was in another gang. He wasn't in the gang where I was. I think it was over...it was drug related. And a Dominican shot him in the head. And I seen him in the casket. You know, and they covered his head, you know, the bullet wound, and I seen it. You know, and that was the saddest part. You know, and I think about the time I been blessed with this, you know roofing over here. Because I...to this day I...I could be homeless. I slept in the streets. Cold weather. When it gets real cold behind bushes, abandoned buildings, anywhere that I had cover, I would sleep, you know. But in an abandoned building, you never know who might come in. They could try to kill you, harm you, sexually molest you. Because I almost had that happen to me. But I had a 2x4 right there, and I heard noises. And this guy was pulling his pants down. I'm just like, you [???]. Bam! He went rolling down the steps. You know, I ain't like this. You know, and that's nasty. That's disgusting, nasty, trifling. You know, but since I been here, I turned my life around. I mean, I go to mental health, you know, for the groups. You know, I'm not ashamed. You know, I have...everybody has their problems, you know. Y'all have problems, right?

UHC: Yeah.

Richard: I mean, I don't think mentally. Yeah, I know, I know what you mean, but, you know, I'm not ashamed to point my finger at myself because I had a long life. My life's, you know, too short. You know, and it's going to keep on...continue to go the way I want it, you know, the way that the Lord wants it to go, it's going to go. I'm getting too old, you know. My life's there. I got my daughters visit me every other Sunday. I see them, and you know, I don't want them...you know, they're young. They're three and six. They're...I'll show you pictures of them before y'all leave. You want me to get them?

UHC: Sure. Yeah.

UHC: So how did you get involved with Upstate?

Richard: I was staying at the mission. I knew Mary Kay Campbell, and, you know, that's how I got in here. Now these two little girls, I'm married...still married to their mom. We got...I got visitation with them. But I'm getting ready to get divorced from their mother, because she's a known crack addict and a prostitute, and she don't want to get right and get clean. So, it's time for me to move on.

UHC: So, are they living with her?

Richard: With their aunt, the one that works at the Salvation Army. She's got some physical and what do they call that? What do they call that?

UHC: Mental?

Richard: You know, yeah, you know they got...basically, they...it's court ordered that they stay with them. I don't have no..whatcha' name?

UHC: Custody?

Richard: Yeah, there you go.

UHC: Do you want to try and get custody?

Richard: I can't.

UHC: You can't ever?

Richard: Uh-uh. I've got, you know, physical conditions, epilepsy. They say if I had a fit or something, you know, fall out, they wouldn't know what to do.

UHC: Oh, yeah.

Richard: I mean, she just turned six, and that's three. What are they going to do?

UHC: Have you always had epilepsy?

Richard: I was born with it as I heard. You know. This one [referring to a photograph] looks like she's trying to bite my ear. They were just here Sunday, just yesterday.

UHC: They are so cute. They are.

Richard: I mean, that's the problem. See, her sister is my wife's sister is not like that. This is one when I left Jersey to come up to Greenville, she was pregnant with her. And she heard that she was pregnant by me, by, you know, by her mom, you know, my wife's sister, and she didn't like that. She...she told her sister, you know my wife's sister told her,

"Why didn't you stay with your own color?" Your own...you know, I hate racial. You know, that's judgment.

UHC: So, how did you meet your wife if...did she live down in Greenville.

Richard: No, she lived in Jersey with me. She lived down there in the city with me. She didn't live with me, but she lived around the area. And I ranned into her one day, so we started dating and all that. She was looking at a religion, you know. What do they call it? Tramp, tract? She goes to church. They both go to church with me when I have them every other Sunday.

UHC: What are their names?

Richard: This one's Alia. The other one's Samantha. That's Samantha. They're monsters. I mean, this one right here's got some weight on her. This one, I told her, "Let me see your baby." "Oh no, you ain't seeing my baby." I mean, I got toys. They love their toys. But they make a mess, then I got to straighten it up.

UHC: That's what little girls do.

Richard: Yeah, they're babies. I can't wait...I want them, you know, that's my wish. You know what my wish is? For them to go to college and make something of theirselves. That's my wish. I want them to go to college, though. You know, that's all I...that's all I ask. That'll really make me happy. You know, because I never [???] to nothing but drugs, you know, in the gangs. You know, nothing. I didn't even go to fifth grade. You know, I ain't accomplished nothing. What did I accomplish?

UHC: Becoming sober is a pretty good accomplishment.

UHC: You said that you were living on the streets. Where was that? In Camden or in Greenville?

Richard: Oh, up here. I stayed over there behind where the Salvation thrift store. You know where I'm talking about? I stayed over there. I stayed...you know where [Watkins?] Street's at? The rescue mission's at? There's a street named Foster Street, and it's abandoned building. I stayed in there over the apartments.

UHC: Is that the row of old apartments?

Richard: Yes.

UHC: Yeah. I've seen that.

Richard: With the train tracks? Anywhere I can go for cover from rain, in snow, you know, anything because it was cold. I mean, I had stuff stolen. I had jackets stolen. You know, I had everything you could think of. I mean, I had to go, you know, to the mission, you know, just to get a sandwich because I ain't have no money. Because, you know,

when you get in trouble, they'll cut your check off. Then I had to go back. Because I was so...what's the word for that? When you're on drugs real bad?

UHC: Addicted?

Richard: Very addictive. There's another word for that. Very bad, you know, set on it...hooked.

UHC: Hooked. I was thinking that.

Richard: Yeah, that's an old word. That's an old word. That just...that came right to me. Hooked. Hooked. You know, you know, narcotics is not a joke. I mean, it's too much out here. You know, even kids are doing it. Just like that one that was arrested for huffing on a can. You know, that's...that's addictive. You know, back in my time, too, I used to sniff airplane glue. I ain't going to try to tell y'all how to do that. Because we used to do that. You know what that is, right? Airplane glue? Super glue?

UHC: Like Elmer's?

Richard: No, that won't do nothing. You know regular markers?

UHC: Yeah.

Richard: You know, they don't have it now, but back then they had this marker where you could sniff, you know, and it gets you your contact. I know all about it. You know, butane, spray paint, you know. My life came to a change like I was saying. No more for me. You know, and I see over here at the soup kitchen, I'm like, "Wow." That was me at one time. When I was over there at that soup, it was everywhere. You see all the homeless. I was like, that could have been me. Could still be me, you know, if I didn't get myself the help that I needed. You know, and I'm off. It's been, like I said, six years, and I don't need it no more. Because it burned my brain cells. Basically fried my brain cells are dead.

UHC: How long did you...how long were addicted to drugs for?

Richard: Wow. Couple years. About two or three. Then, you know, she was taken by DSS...the littlest one there. We were staying in Jesse Jackson, then, you know, she was taken from us by DSS because they said they found cocaine in her blood system. So we had to go to court, me and my wife and make the judge ordered us to go to Phoenix Center. Drug Treatment, outpatient, and what do they call that? Parenting classes. So, I had to go through that. You know, and I think, you know, back then I was a bad parent. Yeah, you know, I wasn't a good...wasn't a good father for all my children, even the ones upstate. You know, and I'm trying to reach out to them to show them, you know, which I treat them both the same. You know, there ain't no equals. You know what I mean? I don't treat one...they say like this, if I had two dollars, I ain't going to give one a dollar and not the other. You know, I'm trying to show them that, you know, I'm trying to be a father to them. You know, that's all I want to be. I want to be a father to them. Not addictive father. Because I'm still addicted. I'm still...you know, I'm not on it, but I'm

still...I'm still an addict. I'm always going to be an addict. And I'm not ashamed to say it. But I blew up. You know, I was skinnier than you. But I'm bigger than you. I'm 230 pounds. You know, I'm not trying to hurt your feelings or nothing. You know what I mean? I ain't trying to hurt her feelings. I ain't trying to hurt your feelings. I mean, I was skinnier. You were bigger than me. You know, crack cocaine will take your weight down. My face was shrunked in. I mean, my eyes, you know, when you smoke crack cocaine, I don't know if you ever heard. Your eyes be like that. They'll go roaming up into your head, and you won't eat. You know what I mean? I hear a buzzing. You know, and you know, you would even, you know, sell anything you could if it was value to go sell it to the dope man. Just to get a...just to get a rock. It didn't matter. If it was a pair of good shoes, you know what I mean? I had a carton of Newport's one time. Took it to the dope man just for it, you know, it was worth like twenty-something dollars. I only got ten dollars. Small rock. Two hits, you're done. You know, fifteen minute high, then you come down. It's like the stock market, up and down, but it goes...only a fifteen minute high. So, I'm just glad that I'm not on it no more. I got, you know, church support. You know, I go to the center of mental health, you know. I got them. You know, that's all I got. You know, I got the God support.

UHC: So, you weren't taking drugs when you were dealing them?

Richard: No. Oh, yeah, I was smoking marijuana. I ain't going to say I wasn't up there. You know, marijuana is a very popular item. Yeah, but you know, you never know what they're going to put in drugs these days. What kind of chemicals. Because just like in crystal meth, you know, crack cocaine, they'll put anything. Rat poison in it, you don't know. We don't know. I mean, I robbed, you know make it look like crack cocaine. It was sheetrock. They made it look like it was. Just...I had got my check that time, and you know, my wife went to go get it. So okay, she came back. One was fake. Three others were real. We tried the first one. It didn't burn. It just turned black. I'm going to kill this guy. We couldn't find him. I got beat for twenty dollars there. But you know, you know, life is good when you don't do drugs. You know, I have Bible study here tonight at seven o'clock. You know, I try...I had a couple of them come, and there's a couple that drink and do crack, but they won't come. Because they don't want the help. Because they're addicted. There ain't no help in this world they want.